

Agriculture/Residential Working Group Meeting

April 30, 2015

Meeting Notes

Location: CE&H Ruritan Hall, 8881 Eclipse Drive, Suffolk, VA 23434

Start: 1:00 pm

End: 3:00 pm

Meeting Attendees:

Dana Gonzalez- DEQ/TRO, Jennifer Howell-DEQ/TRO, Jim Winters-NRPA, Stewart Lassiter-Suffolk DPU, David Keeling Suffolk Public Works, Erin Rountree-Suffolk Public Works, Melissa Lindgren-Isle of Wight, Art Kirby-DCR, Robert Johnson-NRPA and resident, Jay Duell-Western Tidewater Health District VDH, Elizabeth Taraski-NRPA, Gordon Hatchell-resident, Alice Seaman-resident, Marvin Seaman-resident

I. Agenda Item: Best Management Practices (BMPs), Timeline, and Costs

Discussion: DEQ representatives reviewed the initial best management practices to be included in the plan as well as the associated costs and timeline for implementation. Agricultural BMPs were discussed first. DCR representatives explained that there are only two livestock producers in the watershed, one of whom may be interested in some best management practices. In addition, there are many horse owners in the watershed, but generally these horse owners already have good management practices in place. There was discussion about whether the VACS codes should be included in the plan if the plan allows for more funding than the typical VACS BMPs. The proposed reimbursement rate for cover crops in the plan is \$100 per acre, but the VACS cost share funding for this practice (SL-8B) is either \$40 for early planting or \$15 for late planting. It was suggested that the use of this \$100 per acre be confirmed and potentially tailored to maximize water quality benefits (because the cost share amount would be attractive to many farmers). Some suggestions included stipulating that the time frame for planting is early in the season and placing an emphasis on planting of cover crops in “buffer areas” around streams. For example, the plan could say that the practice should be within 200 ft of a stream edge, rather than all over the field. In addition, we should consider increasing the number of SL-8B acres, the currently allotted 215 acres could be used by one farm quite easily and we want to ensure that there is enough funding to increase this practice on a variety of farms. One statistic that was cited is that in the Peanut SWCD, \$1.3 million in cost share for SL-8B has been distributed. In addition, DCR questioned whether the LE-2T practice (Livestock Exclusion with 10 ft set-back) should warrant the same reimbursement as LE-1T, which requires a 35 foot buffer. It was suggested that either LE-2T be removed, or if it is left in the plan, less funding be allocated to that practice.

It was recommended that because each phase of implementation would cover 10 years, the number of education programs and the cost per program, especially residential programs, should be increased. NRPA representatives agreed to help hone the education numbers using information from previous programs. In addition, rain garden, residential buffer, and horse BMP education should be added to the residential education curriculum. It was noted that the funding allotment for septic system installation with a pump was probably low for the area; the cost should be increased from \$6,500 to \$8,000. In addition, stakeholders asked why \$600 was allotted for each pet waste station when the actual cost for the station would be lower. DEQ representatives explained that the total cost included in the IP would allow for pet waste station, bag, and liner costs. After this explanation, the group agreed that \$600 per station would be okay.

II. Agenda Item: Review of Current Watershed Activities

Discussion: Elizabeth Taraski, Executive Director of the Nansmond River Preservation Alliance (NRPA), told the group about a recent restoration project that they completed with a local boy-scout troop at the mouth of Chuckatuck Creek. They placed 200 bags (40 lbs each) of oyster shells about 10 feet offshore to create oyster habitat and also planted marsh grass to restore some of the shoreline with natural habitat. In addition, NRPA is encouraging local land owners to install living shorelines and grow oysters off of their docks to help improve local water quality.